

## Director's Order #52B: Graphic Design Standards

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_  
Director

Effective Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Sunset Date: This Order will remain in effect until revised or rescinded

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### **I. Background**

Since its earliest days, the National Park Service has been steeped in rich visual imagery. The deep green and gray uniform and the broad-brimmed hat have long been engaging symbols of the Service's workforce. The rustic buildings and scenic parkways created by the Civilian Conservation Corps during the 1930s, and still evident in many parks, are considered classic examples of American architecture, landscape architecture, and engineering. The familiar Arrowhead Symbol, NPS uniform and, more recently, the highly regarded park brochures and NPS website provide vivid illustrations of the Service's graphic design tradition.

The wide appeal of our mission comes from the diversity of our work—from parks across the country, to our programs, which touch thousands of communities. With such variety, it can be difficult—or nearly impossible—for people to recognize and understand the extent of our responsibilities and the important services we provide. We have to help them make these connections. While the American people are familiar with, and value, individual aspects of the Service's visual traditions, they do not have a strong image of the National Park Service as a single, national organization.

The easiest way for people to connect the places we care for, the programs we manage, and the projects we make possible, is for all of these things to share a similar appearance—a common graphic identity. To achieve this common graphic identity, the Service has concluded that a process of “branding” should be applied, and clear standards should be developed to guide the creation of a broad range of NPS communications—from business cards, to websites, to outdoor signage. The policy foundation for these standards was published in the form of Director’s Order [#52A: Communicating the National Park Service Mission](#), which would be supplemented by this Director’s Order #52B, and by:

- [#52C: Park Signs](#); and
- #52D: Use of the Arrowhead Symbol (revised draft will be issued soon).

## **II. Purpose of this Order**

In identifying implementation activities and responsibilities for communicating the National Park Service mission, Director’s Order #52A states the following:

*Graphic design standards for all NPS media will be developed to bring a consistent look to NPS materials. Policy applicable to these standards will be issued through Director's Order #52B: Graphic Design Standards, and will be mandatory. The policy will address how the arrowhead symbol, the copyrighted phrase “Experience Your America,” and any other graphics-related requirements will be used in publications and other materials. The Director’s Order will be accompanied by a “Level 3” reference manual and Web materials containing the actual standards and easy-to-use templates and prototypes. Standards will be maintained both in hard copy and on [www.graphics.nps.gov](http://www.graphics.nps.gov). Lead responsibility: Harpers Ferry Center. (Section III.E.)*

The purpose of this Director’s Order is to carry out pertinent aspects of these instructions. The ultimate purpose of the inter-related “52” series of Director’s Orders is to help us improve the public’s understanding of the NPS mission. Graphic design standards in conjunction with this Director’s Order #52B will offer new opportunities in how we communicate with the public, and in the public’s perception of the National Park Service. In essence, the graphic design standards will reinforce a “brand” that will be indelibly associated with the NPS. Our communications with our stakeholders and visitors—and those with whom we have yet to develop such relationships—will be more distinctive, more consistent, and more appropriate to the Service and its mission.

## **III. Authority to Issue this Order**

This Director's Order is issued under the authority of the 1916 National Park Service Organic Act (16 USC 1 through 4), and delegations of authority found in Part 245 of the Department of the Interior Manual. As is the case with all components of the NPS directives system, this Order is intended only to improve the internal management of the NPS and it is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or equity by a party against the United States, its departments, agencies, instrumentalities or entities, its officers or employees, or any other person.

## **IV. Instructions and Requirements for Standards**

The Harpers Ferry Center Manager will develop graphic design standards to achieve the purposes of this Director's Order and Director's Order #52A.

**A. Purpose and Scope of Standards.** The standards will:

- Offer a simple, but strong, foundation for an effective organizational identity (i.e., the NPS "brand");
- Allow for a reasonable degree of flexibility while still achieving a consistent visual approach;
- Be applied to all NPS communication materials, in all media forms;
- Address how they will be applied in "partnership" situations or with park concessioners. (See section V, below.)

**B. Signature Elements.** The standards will provide instructions in the use of the signature elements of the NPS's organizational identity, including:

- The graphic overbar (or black band);
- The Arrowhead Symbol;
- Distinctive fonts and typefaces (typography); and
- Specific colors.

Instructions will also be provided on the use of other basic building blocks of the NPS organizational identity, such as:

- Secondary type identification ("National Park Service" and "U.S. Department of the Interior");
- The green, gray, and brown colors; and
- The use of structured layouts (as exemplified by Unigrid park brochures and handbooks).

**C. Templates.** The standards will include publication templates for illustration and instructional purposes. They will illustrate how the graphic design standards will be applied to various product types (e.g., web pages, mobile apps/social media, booklets, brochures, business cards, newsletters and newspapers, office forms, rack cards, and reports). In addition to templates or examples for use exclusively by NPS parks and programs, templates or examples will be included for use by, or with, concessioners or others who partner with the NPS. (See section V, below, regarding partnership arrangements.) Revised templates will be added as implementation of the standards matures and expands.

**D. Technical Details.** The standards will be issued in the form of technical guidance, which will be available on the Graphic Identity Program's website. Over time, as the standards are broadened, additional templates and samples will be made available.

## **V. Applicability to Partnerships**

The graphic identity standards will be applied most often to situations where the NPS has full and exclusive management responsibility for an area, program, or activity. However, the standards must also address situations where the Service is engaged in "partnership" activities. A "partnership" is defined as a mutually beneficial collaborative relationship between the NPS and some other group, agency, or organization.

**A. Broad Range of External Partners.** As Congress has expanded the NPS mission, the numbers and types of partner relationships have grown. Partners may include an individual, an organization, or a governmental entity at the State, local, tribal, or Federal level. NPS partners sometimes share responsibility for administering a park or park-like area, and most of our programs and other activities are carried out in conjunction with State, local, or private sector partners. In these situations, it is important that any graphic materials make clear to the public the respective roles of the Service and its partner(s), in keeping with our goal of enhancing the public's understanding of the full scope of what the NPS is and what it does. It is also important that our partners, and our relationship with them, be appropriately and accurately acknowledged.

[Reviewers: Your comments are invited on "NPS and its Partners: Graphic Identity Framework, on-line at [http://classicinside.nps.gov/documents/PartnerID\\_Draft\\_12.pdf](http://classicinside.nps.gov/documents/PartnerID_Draft_12.pdf).]

**B. Differing Levels of Involvement.** Activities that result in collaborative relationships between the NPS and its partners vary greatly. The NPS's involvement or participation can be generally categorized as: (a) significant, and greater than the partner's role; (b) equal to the partner's role; or (c) significant, but less than equal to the partner's role; or, (d) minor, when compared with the partner's role. The graphic identity standards must accommodate the spectrum of possible relationships, and do so in a way that does not "dilute" or diminish the NPS "brand" embodied in the signature elements of the black band, the Arrowhead Symbol, the distinctive typography, and the green, gray, and brown colors.

**C. Written Documentation of the Relationship.** In order to properly apply graphic identity standards, the partner entity and the NPS must have a clear and mutually agreed to written understanding of the nature of the relationship. (This in turn should be acknowledged in a formal agreement or other document that is kept on file along with other records associated with the partnership.) Whatever understanding is reached must be appropriately reflected in any materials that are placed before the public in connection with the partnership. Most written materials prepared for the public will provide an opportunity to explain the relationship clearly; but there are many situations where the relationship will be expressed in the form of a simple graphical representation, using the partner and NPS identifiers.

**D. Distinct Graphic Identities.** The graphic identity standards must provide clear and sufficient guidance so that NPS managers, as well as potential partners, can graphically represent their relationship in accordance with the purpose of this Order. NPS partners are encouraged to develop their own distinct graphic identities. Partners should not use NPS graphic identity elements such as the black overbar and common NPS typefaces in their materials, since that would tend to create confusion and run counter to the purpose of "branding."

## **VI. Standards Review Committee**

The Manager of Harpers Ferry Center will establish a standing Standards Review Committee composed of one representative from the partnerships office, the policy office, the communications office, and (on a rotating basis) three regions and two program areas. The purpose of the committee will be to review and approve proposed standards and to resolve graphics-related issues as they arise. Other interested parties—from a directly affected park or

program, for example—may be invited to participate if more representation would benefit the decision-making process. The Manager will provide continuing opportunity for feedback from park and program staff, who will be encouraged to communicate their experiences in applying the standards. The goal will be to ensure that the standards are practicable and achieve their intended purpose. Any issues that the committee cannot resolve internally may be referred to the Executive Council of the National Leadership Council

## **VII. Waiver of Standards**

The purpose of standards is to achieve a high level of quality and consistency Service-wide. However, the standards will also allow flexibility sufficient to reasonably accommodate most unanticipated needs. Consequently, waivers should be sought only under the most compelling circumstances. Waivers will be submitted to the Manager of the Harpers Ferry Center for consideration by the Standards Review Committee. The committee may approve requests for waivers when it believes that the integrity of the standards and the purposes of this Director's Order will not be compromised. A waiver request that is denied by the committee may be appealed to the Director, through the Manager of Harpers Ferry Center. The committee will issue procedures for the appeals process.

## **VIII. Other Sources of Guidance**

Additional information related to this subject:

Director's Order #52A: Communicating the National Park Service Mission  
Director's Order #52C: Park Signs  
Director's Order #52D: Use of the Arrowhead Symbol (in draft)  
NPS Graphic Identity Program Website ([www.graphics.nps.gov/](http://www.graphics.nps.gov/))

-----*End of Director's Order*-----